



Regimental System

CAPTAIN GUSTAV PERSON

There has been a great deal of discussion recently about the need to restore a sense of cohesiveness and esprit de corps to the Infantry. One proposed method of achieving this is the adoption of a modified British regimental system.

The regimental structure of the British Army is unique among the armies of the world. Begun in the 17th century, it has survived, with relatively few changes, to the present day.

Despite the changes, each regiment continues to preserve its identity within the army, even though recent amalgamations have drastically changed the individuality of certain units. Continuity, though, has been preserved at all costs, and each recruit is still offered the opportunity to serve in his county regiment alongside his friends and neighbors.

The soldier is imbued with his regiment's history and traditions, and he receives formal training in them. He knows he will serve exclusively with his own regiment and will not be arbitrarily posted to some other unit without his consent. In effect, the regiment is a family with successive generations of officers and enlisted men serving in its ranks. Strong efforts are made to maintain active veterans' associations and to foster affiliations with the cities, towns, and communities in the regiment's recruiting area.

The feeling of the regiment as a family is present at all ranks from the colonel of the regiment to the lowest private. Such comradeship and continuity are the basic ingredients of the British regimental system.

This system can be adapted for use by the U.S. Army and I believe it might offer a number of benefits.

- A primary recruiting region (regimental area) within the country could be designated for each infantry regiment in the Army. A regimental headquarters could be located at an Army post or a convenient National Guard armory, or an Army Reserve Center. At the headquarters, a regimental secretary and a small staff could handle such matters as recruiting, public relations, and other regimental business. A regimental museum there might attract recruits and favorable public attention.

- Recruiters would be encouraged to enlist soldiers into their own regiments.

- Training depots could be established at specified posts for the regiments recruiting in their vicinity. For example, all of the regiments recruiting in the northeastern United States would send their recruits to the training center at Fort Dix, New Jersey. Drill sergeants and instructors would be drawn from the parent regiments. This would instill in the new soldier a sense of belonging from

his first day of service.

- Affiliations would be established with the National Guard regiments in the regimental area. The British Army has now incorporated all its reserve battalions into its regular army order of battle. Since many of our National Guard regiments pre-date our Regular Army regiments, this may not be a wise idea here. But regimental ties would strengthen a Regular Army regiment's position in a community, especially if its soldiers were encouraged to enlist in the affiliated National Guard regiment when they were discharged.

- An Honorary Colonel for each regiment in the Army could be designated, and he would be responsible for welfare, recruiting, veterans' affairs, unit administration, and traditions. The colonel would normally be a distinguished officer or civilian who had served in the regiment at one time. In the British Army, these officers have been quite successful in promoting their regiments.

- A system of regimental veterans' associations could be formed. The British have tied their veterans and active members together by regularly published newsletters and journals that provide information to all members of the regimental family.

- Finally, once a regiment had established its regimental area, the

Army would make certain that the battalions of that regiment would be kept in being for long periods of time. The battalions would rotate throughout the world as complete units.

The above suggestions might cost money and a regimental system would require extra effort to organize and administer. In the long run, however, it would result in a more efficient and professional army with better morale. Each soldier would

feel that he had a stake in the success of his own battalion, a feeling that he

might never find as a member of a more impersonal organization.



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THIRD JOB



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The battalion S4's job is one that few officers will stand in line to get. And yet his job is an important one, probably as important as any other. Unfortunately, though, the S4 is the one most likely to be criticized when something is not where it is supposed to be when it is supposed to be there.

There is no standard description that fits every battalion S4. He may be brand new or he may have some experience. He may be overseas with a well-defined readiness mission, or he may be stateside with a deployment mission. Although he may be a former company commander, he is more likely to be in a holding pattern waiting for a command to open up.

Not many people fully understand his position and its difficulties — and that sometimes includes his battalion commander, who in most cases has never served as an S4 himself. The chief problem with this lack of

understanding is that, in most battalions, when it comes to the tactical training cycle, the S4 has to take his place in line behind the S2 and the S3. In addition, because his performance can be more easily measured than that of the other key officers in a combat battalion, he is especially vulnerable to failure and criticism.

My purpose is not to try to get sympathy for the battalion S4; neither is it to ask for relief on his behalf. My purpose is to remind everyone concerned that the S4 has what amounts to three jobs, not just the two that usually come to mind.

First, he has to see that the battalion and company commanders get the equipment they need when they need it. His second job is to see that the logistics regulations are followed and that the appropriate reports are prepared. His third job is to be ready to handle the battalion's logistics

needs in combat. And it is dangerous for him and for others to assume that doing the first two jobs will automatically prepare him to do the third. But an S4 may have trouble coming to grips with this aspect of his job for two reasons.

First, too many battalion commanders change their S4s too frequently, which does not allow an S4 time to get comfortable in the job. Secondly, an S4 is usually so tied up with his first two jobs, which are probably more pressing at the time, that the third one is usually shunted aside. But what the S4 and the other people on the battalion staff must realize is that when combat comes, those first two jobs will seem like small potatoes.

This means, of course, that the S4 must always be ready to shift suddenly from the routine of his first and second jobs into the pressing demands